Letter from Taizé

Living the Council of Youth

December 1975

Never wearying, Christ seeks us, labouring at us, day and night, with unspeakable love. Relentlessly he questions : do you love me ? Do you love me more than anyone else ?

Because the relationship with him is one of friendship — and every friendship knows periods of indifference — so our lives contain periods when Christ does not matter, and we wonder if we have completely abandoned him.

Every friendship needs fresh starts, beginning again in reconciliation. By reconciling ourselves with Christ, we discover him somehow anew : as God's poverty, love's loving, ill-treated, hurt by me, rejected by many, yet never wearied of us.

So we let him lay hold of us once more, and sing the free gift of such love, singing the happiness of a communion, opening to the praise of his love in order to begin constantly anew.

Brother Roger

For a year and a half now, we have been in an opening stage of the Counc of Youth. It has been a time of looking for ways for the Church to becom a *"people of the beatitudes"*, a *"universal community of sharing"*.

All together, we have been trying to find signs which express what we ar striving for : holding a *"day of the People of God"* at Taizé ; choosing, a sites of the various Council of Youth celebrations, places where the Churc is already undergoing the beginnings of a springtime.

And personally, since we do not wish to ask anything of others withou beginning with ourselves, we look for ways of being, in our day-to-day living women and men of sharing, women and men of communion. Like those wh address us in the following pages ...

PRAISE AT THE HEART OF LIF

Our commitment to follow the risen Christ does no spare us from the pull of two opposite extremes. Ou human nature is set between them both, and both have the same source : the desire to dominate by possessing

On the one hand, instead of letting ourselves be guided by the Spirit, we persist in trying to treat the gifts placed within us as our own private property. Filled with enthus iasm, overjoyed at having discovered a communion with Christ, we hammer out for ourselves, and on a long-term basis, what we take to be God's plan for us. Little by little we turn into activists eager for immediate, spectacular results. Our feverish independence takes us further and further away from the source ; we forget that "salvation does not come from ourselves, it is a gift from God".

Then, discovering our conceit and the emptiness that this excessive activism masks, we are seized with a pro-

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PRAISE IN ALL OUR DAYS, a modern English translation of the forms o common prayer used at Taizé, has just been published by The Faith Press 17, Wing Road, Leighton Buzzard (Beds), England LU7 7NQ. Their North American agents are Morehouse-Barlow, 14 East 41st St., New York 10017 USA Copies should be obtained through the local bookshops, not ordered from Taizé

ound disgust at ourselves : "I have nothing to give to anyne", "I act not out of love, but for show", "I have no real dea of what giving means ; everyone has a false picture f me."

But in this case, we are treating our poverty as a ersonal possession. We become preoccupied with our own aults, almost as if we wanted to stand out because of them, ust as we wished to do earlier because of our many gifts. Deciding that we are worthless, this time we forget that God's love dwells within us, that "he has chosen us from efore the creation of the world".

It is not up to us to decide what is good or bad for ourelves. All we can do is to abandon ourselves, without trying to possess either riches or poverty. When we are obsesed with our personal development, reckoning that we are ither the richest or poorest of all, only the praise of God an pull us out of ourselves. Praise is not passivity. It is bandonment and trust. It lies at the heart of our life. Praising God each morning for what he will lead us to be that ay. Being thankful for what God intended us to be. Poverty in what we are more than in what we have...

HOPE IN THE NIGHT

I am groping in a darkness of confusion. The situation f my (Asian) country prevents anyone who knows it from oping for communion among peoples : Christians are ivided among themselves, Christians and Muslims wage ar against each other, poverty lays a heavy hand on the asses, martial law brings forth oppression and opens up he country to more multi-national corporations and foreign nvestors, the poor farmers and workers are trampled own more and more into the depth of hopelessness. And o one cares, except a handful of youths who try to eke ut the best.

(continued on page 6)

NEWS FROM

A priest who was at Taizé last August 17 for the "day of the Peopl of God", writes what the event meant for him :

"I wanted to live the day intensively with young people in order to hea with them and through them, what the Spirit is saying to the Church today For a priest there are challenges that it does you good to hear. It was a through we were on the Mount of the Beatitudes, sitting to listen to the Gospe Everywhere you went, the only question was Christ and what he demands Constantly I found myself recalling the words the apostles spoke to the Lor words which remind me of the seeking of so many poor people in Lati America : 'Lord, everyone is looking for you'. *In the different 'districts' I too part in, I re-lived something of that unique experience of the Gospel I ha during ten years spent in the Amazon basin. Gathered together on the hill a Taizé, we prayed intensely and joined the prayer of millions of others, s strongly did we feel the effects of Penecost's wind of universality : despit our different nationalities, everyone was able to communicate with everyon else."*

During the month of November, the government of Chile ordered th "Committee for Peace" to be dissolved. The committee was an ecumenica organism created after the coup d'etat to provide aid to victims of injustice prisoners, wives of prisoners and of missing persons, and children. During hi voyage to Chile last January, Brother Roger had many contacts with thos in charge of this committee. When he learned it had been dissolved, Brothe Roger instantly sent the following message to Cardinal Silva, the archbisho of Santiago.

"Following my voyage to Chile, I kept silent. Today I must speak out i the face of the suppression of the Committee for Peace by the Chilea government. In Santiago, I saw with my own eyes the work accomplished wit unflagging courage by this committee, to give aid to the most unfortunate an hope to those in despair. I have confidence in your powers of discernment t discover ways of continuing this work. With so many others in Chile, you ar a living witness of the risen Christ in agony until the end of the world. Re assured of my faithful support."

The first of the Council of Youth celebrations in Africa is taking plac in Douala (Cameroun), December 26-28. Young people coming from other part of Cameroun and other countries are invited to be present in Douala alread from Sunday, December 21. From the time of their arrival they will take pa in the life of three sections of the city : New Bell, Bependa and Nylon. The will be welcomed by the residents of these neighborhoods, staying in thei homes, meeting the various already-existing communities, sharing their dail lives and in particular spending Christmas together. From Friday the 26th t

FAR AND NEAR

unday the 28th, everyone will come together in one of the neighborhoods for ıe celebration itself, entirely centered on the life of the People of God. In ıe district of New Bell, each evening during the months of November and ecember, people preparing for the celebration have been meeting for prayer a shack where some of them live.

Three other African celebrations are in preparation for the coming months. mes and places will be announced in the next *Letter from Taizé*.

Four young people, from Great Britain, Cameroun, France and Indonesia, 're currently in East Africa. They are living in a poor section of Nairobi, Kenya, nd making many visits to other parts of East Africa. They see their presence s primarily one of prayer, welcome, and creating links between very different eople. Recently one of them, Octavianus from Indonesia, wrote :

"The fact that we come from different countries and continents is really triking people. It reveals that all of us belong to only one universal family... ut more than this is the fact that we are from different church backgrounds. ı us the people here see something that many are yearning for. It is not our ıtention (it is even beyond our ability) to promote or impose unity or re-onciliation, but they recognise it through our presence.

... A young man said to us, *'It is very difficult for me to imagine how the our of you manage to live the differences but still remain one. But it is really ood to see so...'* Another said, *'This is ecumenism in action...'*

Tribalism is still a problem in Africa ; it is even stronger than nationalism. s someone put it : *'This becomes an obstacle in preaching and presenting the ospel.' 'In our own tribe we really love one another but we don't love people om other tribes',* said another person.

But in the midst of this grows a fresh ray of hope : the young people. We ave met quite a lot of them, via organisations, clubs, schools, church youth roups. They may come from different tribes, but they find themselves having ıe same search and hope, and they are looked upon as signs of hope and hannels of peace and reconciliation for their tribes. One person told us : *We really hope that the young people will break the wall that separates us and revents us from loving one another'.*"

Final issue of the series PLACES OF HOPE, number 10 of the journal *ommunion* is entitled SALT AND LIGHT. It tells of places where Christians re, according to the Gospel, salt of the earth and light for many : from Bangla esh to Spain, from France to Canada, and in the many lands where Christians re leaven in the dough despite pressures, harassments or persecutions. It lso contains two articles to stimulate reflection, one on giving up privileges, ıe other on the Beatitudes.

I see hope like rosy fingers of the early morning sun slowly piercing through the dark clouds of my confusion. People from different nations group together and make communion possible ; breaking the barriers of culture, economic limitations, language difficulties and religious traditions, they all share, pray and see themselves and others in the light of the Gospel message.

This hope is only a beginning. I don't know how it will grow and bear fruit. But I see that it must continue to be active and dynamic, continuously burning in our hearts until Christ is fully incarnated in our lives. Perhaps, the day will come when Christians learn fully how to be a sign of Christ, "struggling and contemplating", sharing in every aspect, *"not just the bread of life but all earthly goods"*.

WHERE ARE THE POOR ?

My job is not interesting. I have no qualifications, so I've always been a manual labourer. Until just a little while ago, work for me was nothing but a means of making money.

About a year and a half ago, after I came to know Christ, I asked myself : where are the poor ? I was struck most of all by the misery of the Third World, the exploitation by the rich countries and the unequal balance of forces on the earth. But what can I do about all that ? Still, I can struggle on my own level, where I work, together with the other workers. They experience this exploitation as well. It's all on a smaller scale, but the process is the same. The poor and the oppressed are there, too. It's a poverty that is not so striking, the oppression is more subtle : cultural oppression, unequal chances, alienation, tedious work with no future, ideological brow-beating. Discovering all this, I began to wake up.

Now, I can't remain passive any longer. My work has aken on a whole new meaning : I work to be with the ther workers. Work with them, suffer with them, struggle vith them. I should mention that I come from a family of vorking-people. The fact of always having had to struggle o get anything at all gave me a class-consciousness. I feel ne same frustrations as the other workers on a gut level, spontaneous reaction when faced with an unjust situa- ion, no matter how tiny. That's why I am a trade-union ctivist.

TO OPEN EVERY DOOR

I live in the center of Paris. When Hacina, a Moroccan irl, came to visit me, she told me how surprised she was o see so many locked doors in the houses, and so many ouses with their doors locked in the neighborhood. It's rue, the doors are locked : there are many rich people, nany young prostitutes, drug-addicts, poor old people. But nore often than not, they are unaware of each other's xistence. In luxurious shop-windows, merchandise from ll over the world is displayed. But at the cost of what xploitation ? Confronted with all this, some rebel, some ive up, others flee the reality of the neighborhood. Here, here is little room left for hope and happiness.

THE NEXT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AT TAIZÉ

For young people who are at least 18 years old, there are meetings each eek from Monday evening to Sunday afternoon, and every weekend from aturday afternoon to Sunday afternoon (a meeting meant for people between 5 and 17 years of age will take place February 14-15). If possible, write nnouncing your arrival.

EASTER MEETING : *from Good Friday, April 16, to Easter Sunday, April 18.* he Council of Youth will enter its second period (registration forms in the next *etter from Taizé).*

For three years now, a few of us have been meetin together for prayer and reflection on Scripture. As a resul of this searching together and the bonds of friendshi formed, I began to understand better what the Church i all about. At that point, I realized that I had to open m door. So I opened it. Two of us went to live in a tiny apart ment. Someone was always visiting. People who wer lonely, lost, suicidal. Others came to share their joy, t help out, or simply to exchange a few words.

I felt it was necessary to open still other doors. As community-organizer, I have been working with politica refugees from Chile. Some had been in prison, brutalize or tortured. One of them, Carlos, told me : *"Knowing m family and friends are over there while I'm here, knowin that we could die without ever seeing each other again, ca you understand what that means ?"*

Behind each of the doors, I discovered another worl I had to become very silent. And listen a long time befor beginning a hesitant, sometimes difficult dialogue.

But at the same time, I discovered a new and powerfu hope. And I have begun to study the economic relatio ships that bind us together so that this hope, through co frontation with a critical spirit, can become more and mor concrete.

I know there are still many doors left to open, for m and for all of us, if the Church is to become more of place of communication, of communion and friendshi something like a town which opens its doors to all. But know too that a new hope is alive in me. A hope roote in the risen Christ, and not just an idea...

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